

Lake of Coal. The Disappearance of a Mining Township
By David Cook

Houses being busted down left, right and centre. It was a strange feeling to have witnessed it all from the start to the finish. Rotowaro as we knew it was beginning to change forever. All that was being left for us was its memories.

Taniwha Williams, former Rotowaro resident

Rotowaro was once a mining township on the Waikato coalfields west of Huntly. Situated in the path of an opencast mine, it was entirely removed in the late 1980s. The destruction of this community is the subject of Lake of Coal, a 20 year photo-documentary project by New Zealand photographer David Cook.

This groundbreaking book is a complex weave of photographs and text, a multi-layered work of social history that tells the story of Rotowaro from the point of view of the tangata whenua, the workers, their families, management and the photographer himself.

Lake of Coal puts a human face on the economic realities of the late twentieth century and asks: What does coal mining mean on a local level? What happens when a community loses the ground beneath its feet?

One of the richest photographic investigations of location and 'place' that has been carried out in New Zealand.

Anne Noble



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